

Kyodan

News Letter

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PERSONNEL, INFORMATION, THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

.... Japan-German Consultation recommends specific areas of cooperation

Until ten years ago, relationships between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Japanese Christian world were organized around the work of the Mission Society. The First Japan-German Consultation in 1965 marked a shift from that format to one of relationship between churches.

The Second Consultation, held February 25-28 at the Oiso Academy House, began with an evaluation of the experiences of the past ten years, then moved into a vigorous discussion of common concerns for churches in both countries.

The eight-member German delegation was led by the Dr. Heinz Joachim Held, president of the Office of Foreign Relations of the Evangelical Church in Germany*. Japan was represented by 15 persons, including National Christian Council Moderator Takaaki Aikawa and Lutheran and Kyodan leaders.

One of the fruits of the Consultation was a statement summarizing the contents of the discussion, the nature of the relationships and directions for the future.

-- Akira Satake

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Below are quotes and points from the Statement:

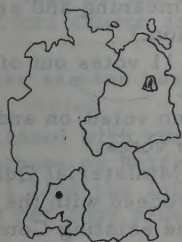
1. Cooperation should be continued... "We believe we can help one another through careful attention to formation and counsel."
2. "Ecumenical partnership between our churches means above all allowing partners to participate in one another's experiences and concerns, perceptions and trials, as

churches of the Gospel in our respective countries." Both sides know too little about the other and about their common history; therefore they "welcome the continuing study of the German Protestant missionary endeavor in Japan."

3. "...A exchange of ideas on theological issues may be helpful to both sides. Debates that make use of non-Western Christian concepts arising from a country with a culture of its own and with the problems of a modern industrial society constitutes a not-yet-accepted challenge for theologians in both countries. Both committees should initiate the exchange of theologians and church workers to counter the difficulties in understanding."

The collection of information and reports on partner churches and the concentration of them in a central place to facilitate dissemination is necessary. Translation of Japanese theological writings into German to further theological work in Europe should be begun. The systematic exchange of personnel will achieve deeper acquaintanceship and improve understanding.

"Japanese and West German relationships are placed in the larger setting of the ecumenical movement in Asia and Europe. Through ecumenical fellowship we churches in countries with expansive economies and highly developed technologies are confronted by the challenge to be responsible for the economically weaker peoples, for the national minorities in our own countries and for the peace of all nations. We believe that our relationships may help us to carry out this responsibility...."



While the Kyodan is national church, churches in Germany are regional churches. Involved specifically in Japan-German cooperation are United Churches and Lutheran churches in West Berlin and Stuttgart.

Relationships are coordinated through the Japan Committee of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the German Committee of the National Christian Council of Japan, in which the Kyodan and the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church participate. The EKD is a federation of 21 Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin.

PROSPECTS FOR MINISTERIAL EXAMINATIONS

Last month's Executive Committee meeting took what may become an important step in resolving the impasse in the Kyodan over ministerial qualifications. By a vote of 14 out of 25, it passed a bill requesting the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications to proceed with the examinations on the basis of the Confession of Faith and the Constitution and Bylaws.

This sets a definite direction after a hiatus in examinations since 1969, resulting from the turmoil over the meaning of confessions in general, the Kyodan's Confession of Faith in particular, and its use in determining a ministerial candidate's qualifications. the ministry.

Succeeding issues of KNL will include a copy of the Kyodan Confession of Faith and resumes of its formation and the controversy that developed around it in the late 1960s. This issue takes a closer look at the recent Executive Committee action.

When the Executive Committee met February 23-25, one whole day was scheduled for discussion of the report of the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications, which had found itself unable to move further and declared its activities "frozen."

This impasse intensified the sense of crisis that already existed in many sectors of the church. Some candidates are waiting to take the tests for ordination and licensing. Some who qualified have refused to be ordained--and others have said they will refuse to take the tests--until the basis of the examination is made clear.

The Ministerial Qualifications Commission was constituted of persons representing a variety of positions ("a miniature of the Kyodan itself"); and the urgency of the issue had brought them together for a total of 100 hours of intensive debate between July and December.

At the same time, pressure was building up within districts and factions. One district declared if the Kyodan could not give ministerial examinations soon it would proceed with its own, raising fears that such action would rip the national fabric of the Kyodan.

As the Executive Committee took up the problem, Commission Chairman Takashi Suga pointed out the key issues.

One lay in the decision of the Executive Committee in April that the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications should in its approach avoid excluding or cutting out any point of view. The Commission decided to continue in the spirit of this decision and take no action without a consensus.

The second stand-off was between two attitudes toward the examination:

- that it be an examination by the Kyodan which respects the Confession of Faith
- that it be on the basis of the Confession of Faith and the Constitution and Bylaws

While the chairman and five other members had accepted the first description, one member had held firmly to the second, and the Commission had accordingly found itself "frozen."

As the debate between Executive Committee members and the Commission members proceeded, districts were asked to report their situations. Gradually the weight shifted from theological gradations to the parish concerns; namely, the need for tests to be given so that churches could get the ministers they need.

In response to the strong desire for the tests being expressed, two bills were proposed, along the lines of the Commission's two thrusts:

1. To conduct the test as a test given by the Kyodan which respects the Confession of Faith
2. To make the Confession of Faith and the Constitution and Bylaws the basis of the examination

(While the connotations that came to be associated with the terms during the long hours of debate are hard to catch from the short-hand, translated versions, the first bill was considered as providing more scope for interpretation, the second as centering more specifically on the Confession and the legal processes of the church. It was felt that, even in the latter case, one of the fruits of the long hours of discussion was a desire to recognize the historical meaning and setting in dealing with the Confession.)

The first bill received 11 votes out of 25 and was therefore defeated.

The second bill was then voted on and passed, with 14 affirmative votes.

This bill instructs the Ministerial Qualifications Commission to proceed with the examinations. However, the existing Commission (continued on page four)

1000th KBC BROADCAST FOR SHINSEI TIME

At 6:45 a.m. on Sunday, March 14, "Shinsei Time" (The New Life Hour) greeted KBC listeners in Kyushu, Yamaguchi and Hiroshima prefectures for the 1000th time.

Radio Station KBC noted that this "unique" locally produced program outdates all other KBC programs, with the exception of news and weather, broadcast over its six-station network.

Actually, the Shinsei Time record goes back a good deal further than its 20 years over KBC. Shinsei Kan first began to use radio as an extension of its long-established program of literature evangelism in 1953.

The 15-minute program offers a Christian message and music by a 20-voice choir. Close relationships are maintained between Shinsei Kan staff and churches in the area, with several Kyushu pastors involved in executive decisions and follow up. The program is also an arena of ecumenical and overseas cooperation, continuing an interest in media evangelism that dates back to the efforts of Reformed Church in America missionaries, Albertus Pieters and Boude Moore.

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CATCHING YOUNG EARS

Riding the short wave boom among young people in Japan, the Joint Broadcasting Committee (JBC) moves to nationwide coverage for its program, "Kokoro no Tomo" (Friend of the Heart), which will be aired nightly, Monday through Friday, from 11:20 to 11:30 p.m., beginning April 1.

Continuing in its usual disc jockey format, the program has a new star and new features for its late-evening audience, many of whom are students and other young people. "Challenge Corner," "Interview Corner," and "Listeners' Night" will provide a variety of settings for guests and message content. Keiko Kimishima, actress and student at Rikkyo University, was chosen from among 42 persons who auditioned for the "talent" role. The current "host" pastor will be the Rev. Tomiju Endo of the Saidaidori Church in Saitama.

Although the program originates in Tokyo, reception will be best in areas outside of Tokyo, and on the following bands: 3,925MHz, 6,055MHz, 9,595MHz.

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FOR THE JAPANESE FAMILY ABROAD

With a potential audience of 55,000 Japanese in the New York metropolitan area, the popular JBC radio program, "Kokoro no Tomo" will begin a new series to be broadcast weekly over a local New York FM station from April 5.

Prime mover in developing the new co-operative ministry has been the New York Japanese American United Church and its pastor, the Rev. Justin Haruyama. Being the only Japanese-language church serving the area, it has had a number of expatriate families attending its services and bringing their children to the Japanese-language church school, although the families may not be baptized.

Hand in hand with the Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission, arrangements have been made through the Joint Broadcasting Committee for AVACO to produce a "Kokoro no Tomo" series geared to the concerns of Japanese living in New York City on a temporary basis. The programs have a positive Christian message, music and human interest items from Japan.

The Japanese language education of the children, the loneliness of single workers and wives, the frustrations of the English language, the uncertainties after one returns to Japan--all are problems which the Japanese, employed by some 400 Japanese firms, are facing. Many young families, often college graduates, experience pressure both in their office and social relationships.

The "Kokoro no Tomo" program will run for 10 minutes during a 30-minute Japanese language program, carried by a New York FM station between 10:30 and 11:00 p.m.

In New York, the Japan American United Church is planning the follow up ministry and will seek to introduce listeners to churches in Japan which they can contact upon their return.

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* Enclosed with this copy of the KYODAN NEWS LETTER is a copy of "A Brief Look," a new
* brochure on Religion in Japan, Christianity in Japan and the Kyodan. We hope you
* will find the information in it useful. Additional copies are available at cost:
* ¥30 per copy plus postage, if mailed.
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Prospects for Ministerial Examinations (cont'd)
sion, some of whose members felt the Executive Committee had in its action ignored its own decision that no view should be set aside, felt it could not carry out the instructions and resigned.

The Executive Committee elected a new commission from its own members and district moderators. This Commission now faces the task of organizing and conducting the examinations in accord with the decision of the Executive Committee--and without losing the good will and reconciliatory mood achieved among members of "opposing camps" during the effort--and in spite of the failure--to reach consensus.

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Below are comments on the action, translated from the Kyodan Shimpo, No. 3845, March 13, 1976 (* indicates Executive Committee members)

*Tsuji, Nobumichi:

The decision, following a sudden turn in the three days of debate, was a miracle. Or perhaps the will of God. If we hadn't taken this action, it would have meant the end of the Kyodan.

Hara, Tadakazu:

I am concerned over the tendency of the Kyodan to become creedal. I can't imagine how the Kyodan, which has been a "relaxed" kind of corporate body, has become "creedal."

*Hirayama, Takehide:

I wanted to see the former Commission, which was a miniature of the Kyodan, conduct the tests on the basis of having

achieved a consensus. From the personnel of the new Commission, I anticipate they will have great difficulty conducting the tests on the basis of the Confession of Faith. I am also concerned about the fate of those who refuse to take the test and hope we will move cautiously.

Sakagami, Mitsuo, (waiting to take the test):

I think the Executive Committee stood where it should stand. Inasmuch as the churches are under the banner of the Confession of Faith, it is appropriate for the examination for pastors who are to serve those churches to be on the basis of the Confession.

Kanazawa, Tsutomu:

Because I believe the basic posture has been established now, I hope that within it there will be increasing breadth. I am glad that it was decided to conduct the test on the basis of the Confession of Faith, since that is what Chubu district requested.

Iwai, Kensaku:

I feel this takes the backbone out of the Confession of War Responsibility and puts us back where we were with the earlier Ministerial Qualifications Commission (in the late 60s). Doesn't this decision by the Executive Committee contradict its decision in April last year not to exclude any points of view?

The new Commission on Ministerial Qualifications is holding its first meeting February 23-24.

Kyodan Welcomes UCC-USA Overseas Seminar

Twenty-eight leaders of the United Church of Christ (USA) constituted an Overseas Seminar that visited Japan February 28 through March 4 on the last leg of travel in India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The distinctive nature of the seminar was its inclusion of persons from a wide range of national and conference offices, many of whom were for the first time entering into dialogue with church leaders on topics often channeled primarily through the United Church Board of World Ministries.

"Study" by the Seminar proceeded through contacts and discussions in Osaka, Kochi, Kobe, Kyoto, Chiba and Tokyo that touched church-related schools, church involvement in social issues and the inner life of the Kyodan and the Korean Christian Church in Japan. Orientation sessions brought in special speakers on broader topics.

The Seminar was led by UCC President Robert Moss and UCC Moderator Robert Nace, who was born in Sendai, of missionary parents.

RATE	due to the sharp increase in postage rates, plus rising printing
INCREASE	and paper costs, it is necessary to increase KNL subscription rates effective April 1. New subscription rates are: Japan, ¥1,200; Overseas, ¥1,500/\$5.00/13 D.M. When postage is not required, prices are: Japan, one-year, ¥700; single copy, ¥70.